



AAB PROCEEDINGS 19

30 September, 1992

A Traveller Fanzine produced by Clayton R. Bush

Argushiiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin: The "Vilani Repository of All Knowledge." A combined university, museum, and research center on Vland/Vland in the Restored Vilani Empire. The oldest such institution in charted space, the 11,000-year-old institute has an Imperium-wide reputation as a clearinghouse for patents and technology.

MegaTraveller is Dead; Long Live Traveller!

-- Clay Bush

At discussions at GenCon and at the writers' conference in Bloomington afterwards, GDW laid out the outlines of the Virus, the Crash, and the origins of the Star Vikings. This issue of AAB Proceedings discusses these things to inform potential contributors.

WAKE

At the Ramada Inn in Bloomington, those present for the writer's conference met the night before. We were there to hear what GDW will do with the TNE project. We were not there to argue the merits of their plans with them. So we prefaced our discussions with a decision that this was our wake for MegaTraveller, and tomorrow was a different day. Then we talked late into the night about Traveller, Imperial history, the Rebellion, products, and what we would do. Then we went to bed, and next morning we heard GDW's plans.

In the same sense, the following pages are what GDW has already decided to do. You might want to discuss your hopes and fears with someone else before reading them, but...*no letter or argument will stop the appearance of the Virus or the Crash now.* What follows is a lamp on the road GDW has chosen, set to dispel some of the doubt and uncertainty about what will happen.

Fan's letters and email show a high level of concern about different aspects of the change. Those worries may dissolve as quickly as did those that preceded the Inauguration of *ST: The Next Generation*. I hope the following will lay some fears to rest, and direct some readers toward positive, early contributions.

What You Can Do Now

GDW is looking for adventures and material that will support the New Era when it is released. GDW wants to support the line promptly and adequately. (Doubting Thomas's please note: this disclosure policy of GDW is evidence that they will support TNE better than they did MegaTraveller.)

Dave Nilsen intends to have one adventure in each issue of Challenge that advances the timeline. He wants to have two Traveller adventures in each issue, but that depends on getting submissions. Challenge will have more room for Traveller than it has had. GDW has started Journeys to support fantasy RPGs; this includes Mythus, but Shadowrun material will probably move there.

On the other hand, the MT vehicle/starship design system will be scrapped for something simpler. Now is not a good time to develop 30 tech level 15 vehicles. The new system will give equivalent results (jump-2 Sout/Couriers), but will require stating over from the ground up.

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WHAT IN THE STARS

by Mike Mikesch

Ed Edwards has resigned as HIWG chief. He hasn't left HIWG, but for various reasons, he didn't think he could continue as HIWG's Chairsophont or take on any responsibilities as an officer. (This doesn't change the fact that Ed is HIWG's major founder, though.)

Ed's heaviest involvement in *Traveller* began at the end of 1984 when he started publishing *Traveller's* first fanzine,

Working Passage (monthly).

Appropriate to the name, it didn't pretend class or polish, but it did have a lot of charm, information, and ideas. Ed was having fun as *Traveller's* #1 fan, and it came through in his work.

Unfortunately, he also took on more than he could handle. By the end of 1985, he had to conclude *Working Passage* after 12 issues. We were lucky, though, in that two more fanzines started up in Ed's wake, *Imperium Staple* and *Between Worlds*.

It was the following year, 1986, that I linked up with Ed. The shock of Strephon's assassination hit, and *MegaTraveller* was being introduced. After a frantic exchange of letters between the two of us, we founded the History of the Imperium Working Group in support of the unfolding Rebellion.

Times change, and I'm really going to

miss working with Ed.

When Ed announced his resignation, I immediately went looking for a successor. I didn't want the top slot myself, so I queried three long-time active HIWGs, Mark "Geo" Gelinas, Clay Bush, and Bryan Borich.

We discussed succession among the HIWG leadership and decided to make Gel Gelinas HIWG's Chief and Chairsophont. I would stay in the Vice slot. Clay would serve as Secretary/Treasurer and, of course, Editor of AABP. Bryan would handle Advertising and Recruitment.

For those of you that don't know Geo, he has edited the Tidewater Traveller Times (now Terra Traveller Times) since June 1987, is published in Challenge, and is Chief Editor of Imperial Lines. I had the pleasure of working closely with him while we were writing Digest Group's *Grand Explorations* (cancelled). He is married to Kate Leberherz Gelinas (also a HIWGer), the very same who did many of the Vargr illustrations in *Vilani & Vargr*.

Geo is action oriented. He has a style that differs from the way Ed or I handled things, so I foresee some new and interesting things happening in the near future. %^%

NORMAL/OKLAHOMA

5 October, 1992

--Ed Edwards

Greetings fellow HIWG Sophonts!

I hereby reappoint Mark (Geo) Gelinas (aka M.GELINAS) as the vice-ChairSophont of HIWG. I hereby resign the office of HIWG ChairSophont. Thus Mark (Geo) Gelinas is now the ChairSophont of the History of the Imperium Working Group (HIWG). I hope that all those kindly Sophonts who supported me so kindly as the HIWG ChairSophont will likewise render their support to Geo.

Yea for Geo!

Second HIWG ChairSophont!

Long Live HIWG!

I believe, back when I was the HIWG Chairsophont, that in the new member letter I said something to the effect that "HIWG is not a democracy, it is an autocracy and I, Ed, am the autocrat! If you don't like that find another TRAVELLER club." Of course, I had an out there -- there was no other TRAVELLER fan club (HeeHee!).

Lead on then, oh HIWG ChairSophont!

Inside Scoop

Although he had been out of communication for a while, we were surprised at seeming suddenness of his resignation. (Rumor control.) His resignation was due to personal reasons, not the New Era.

Ed's designated successor has been Geo, producer of TTT, the longest running fanzine of any HIWGer. There was some discussion of reassigning duties. As a submariner, Geo is out of contact for months at a time. (He will rotate to shore soon, however.)

It was agreed that I would take over as membership secretary and trasurer. I already maintain the Membership Directory, so it worked well with what we were already doing.

There will probably be some more housekeeping between now and the next newsletter.

Important: There is a man at the post office tearing out the old mail boxes and putting in new ones. Something about old, worn-out mechanisms. PO Box 119 will cease to exist, and I will be at PO Box 895 instead. As I am a regular, the post office staff will happily redirect mis-addressed mail for years, but please start using the new PO Box number. %^%

Collected Notes

SPINWARD SECTORS

--Mike Mikesh

I checked my files and found that Tad Ringo was doing the article for Malikhar Crescent (Beyond Sector). Stephen Madjanovich (S.MADJANOVIC) was working on Far Frontiers for DGP.

Fulani was being developed for DGP as part of the original GRAND EXPLORATIONS. SPINWARD HO has not been formally proposed to anyone as yet, although I plan to send it to GDW as soon as I clear out some other priorities. I intend to carry over the Fulani work into SPINWARD HO.

IPHEGENIA & FULANI

--Geo Gelinias

I wish to make a slight correction to something you mentioned in AAB.

I have indeed covered FULANI in the TIMES, at least the upper portion. However, that which I call DARK RIVER is actually IPHEGENIA and not FULANI. My FULANI material is associated with the AQUARIAN EMPIRE. So, I have covered the complete IPHEGENIA sector, and have published a supplement for it, and the upper half of FULANI.

Yours for Traveller,
Geo.

FAR FRONTIERS

--Geoff Kelly

Hold the presses! Don't tell anyone that they can become the Far Frontiers analyst because, again, you have not heard from the last one!

Here I am. I owe you an apology for not talking to you sooner, however, for the past seven weeks I've been on paternity leave then annual leave to help my wife cope with our two new baby daughters. Yes, count them, two. They have taken up most of my time. Between them and a brief foray into the game "World in Flames" (the whole of WW2), time has just slipped away.

Pret not Argushiigulammi Clayton (translation: Assistant Executive Repositor), I have done the sector dot map and I have done most of the UWP's for one subsector. These I will send to you very soon. Also, if David Schneider hasn't sent you a copy of my document on subsector P of Yiklerdzanzh, let me know and I'll send you a copy.

YIKLERDANZH

--Angus Foster

Michael has handed over G subsector to a Shannon Lewis, who is yet to join HIWG. My alien module for Mi is coming along slowly, I'll send it to you when it is finished (if!). I'm giving subsector E to Ben Arnall, who has finally joined HIWG.

GVURRDON

-Roger Myhre

It was fun at Gencon. Alas, I won't make it next year. I lost my job.

I won't let this disrupt my time working with Gvurrdon or other Traveller related topics. My newsletter, *Kfan Uzangou #2*, will be ready for mailing next week. This may be the last issue, as I'll lose access to a high-speed duplex copier. My last day is November 26, and I may get another issue out before then.

One of my new projects is to update Gvurrdon sector UWP's to TNE. I will change a lot of population, government and law level codes. Most important, I'll change the stellar codes for those stars that can't support a system properly.

I haven't decided yet what to do with the various political factions. Thirz Empire may be the easiest; as it is Zhodani backed, it is the most stable. It, at least, will still be around. I haven't decided about Thoengling yet. Rukh and anti-Rukh will dissolve after a war. Rukh splits up after internal problems, thus we have a mini-rebellion that the Kforuzeng can use.

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AAB Proceedings

Publication Information

AAB Proceedings is a fanzine for developing the Traveller universe. It is a fan document, and discussions are meant to exchange ideas.

Produced and distributed by Clayton R. Bush.

Subscriptions & Back Issues

It is distributed free to all active HIWG members. All others may acquire copies at \$1.00 per issue. Back issues cost \$1.00 per issue.

Submissions

Those interested in submitting material send it to: Clayton R. Bush; PO Box 895; Limon, CO 80828.

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Acknowledgements

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HIWG Connection

HIWG ("History of the Imperium Working Group") is a fan organization using the official Traveller universe. For membership information, write to:

Clay Bush; P.O. Box 895; Limon, CO 80828.

Dave Schneider; 5 East Avenue; Allenby Gardens; S. Australia 5009; Australia

Newsletters and Fanzines

--Clay Bush

This is in alphabetical order.

ImperialLines

-- Mike Mikesh

GDW will combine Imperial Lines #3 and #4 to catch up on the fanzines. This will probably end the theme issues, at least for now. After discussions with Dave Nilsen and Geo Gelinis, we'll probably go straight into TNE support with issue #5, but the editorial direction isn't clear yet.

IL 3/4: GDW would like to have IL #3/4 by about November 1, which means everything should be in John's hands by mid-October. We do have a splendid Zhodani free trader, but the only other thing I received to fit a Zhodani issue is a Lee's Guide adventure, from Greg Lee as usual. Other things I'd like to see:

- 1) Psionic activity detector.
- 2) Psionic drugs. The rules have regular, double, and special, but is it realistic to assume drugs would be so neatly categorized?

Psi drugs are probably derived from a wide variety of plants, animals, and perhaps minerals throughout space. Each will have different forms, benefits, durations, costs, availability, side effects, and so on. This is an opportunity to get creative.

- 3) Psi gimmick. As an example, an animal with latent psionics grows a crystal in its head. Sometimes the crystal has just the right qualities that, when held near the forehead, allows some psionic benefit. A Zho who might inherit one would wear it in his turban or hat.

- 4) Zho weapons or espionage equipment.

IL 5: We could do treat IL #5 as both a Rebellion & Hard Times issue and a farewell to MegaTraveller. A particular article I'd like to do is a discussion about how to run a Rebellion campaign. The Rebellion was called a "spectator sport," but there really was a way to

make it work. Fortunately, it may not be entirely too late -- it sounds like GDW has an interest in supporting different periods of Imperial history.

Kfan Uzangou

Roger Myhre produced a fine second issue of his Vargr-oriented fanzine, detailing more of Gvurdon sector. However, he has been given notice at work. A third issue is likely, later issues only may be distributed.

Jumpspace/Voyages

This magazine has ceased production. It never made money, and King pulled the plug.

Starburst

David Schneider is up to issue 15 of his fanzine for HIWG members in Australia and New Zealand. Most of this fanzine's work relates to Yiklerzdanzh sector, and is safe from Rebellion developments overwriting parts of it. Although the banner says STARBURST is published irregularly, he has managed monthly mailings so far this year.

Starport

This British fanzine has gone into hiatus. Kevin Parry will no longer consolidate and edit materials, and no one has moved to fill the gap. It is unlikely that there will be any more disk mailings, although it could resume distribution.

Signal GK

Leighton Piper is taking over as general editor of Signal GK. Jae Campbell is still in charge of production, but the workload was getting a bit too much.

This British fanzine continues to develop Dagudashaag sector during the Rebellion. The contributors are leery of the New Era revision, and upset that a

TNS announcement ruined a world they were interested in developing.

The fanzine's focus was intended to change from Dagudashaag sector to other regions. Now this change will come sooner rather than later. Probably with issue 7, around January, 1993.

Leighton Piper

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Preston, Lancs. PR1 5UP

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Tel: (0772) 652269

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HIWG-UK: Dissolving? Dissolved?

HIWG(UK) met at NORTH-CON (UK) the first weekend of August. I selected and edited the following two extracts from Starport and letters.—CRB Kevin Parry

I will resign as editor of STarport and HIWG(UK) coordinator after [STarport 19]. This is one earlier than I said in previous notes.

The discussion showed concern about the direction Traveller is going. Rather than drag the Imperium down through the Rebellion, Hard Times, and the Virus, a completely different setting might have been more appropriate.

With the dropping of TIFFANY STAR, it was unclear what members of HIWG were getting for their money. There was a general view that HIWG has gone the way of all Traveller systems, and the weekend was in part a wake for the passing of HIWG. Anything that contributed to 14MB of history, articles, ships, programs, and comments can be very proud.

Signal GK was going strong because of high levels of contribution and artwork. Jae Campbell will likely step down as editor in the near future. There was concern that GDW was ignoring all the hard work that went into Dagudash-aag. Especially, nuking one of the best

planets seemed harsh. There was a feeling that it may be better to develop an area outside the Imperium where the contributors would maintain control of the future of the planets.

There was discussion about starting a new fanzine to include non-Traveller material. It would be seen as a vehicle to set adventures and such outside the Imperium, and to get new gamers interested in Traveller.

Library: Jae Campbell has agreed to look after the disk library and accept requests for documents on disk. Note that Jae will not be printing any documents. Any new or revised HIWG documents should be sent to Jae for inclusion in the library.

Jae Campbell
The Sanctuary
45 Fairfield
Hebden Bridge HX7 6JD
Great Britain
Duncan Law-Green

Any semblance of development organization in HIWG(UK) has disappeared. No one has heard of Mark Henderson since he was appointed Vland Domain Editor at last year's meet. With this and Parry's US bank no longer taking foreign accounts, the group is likely to be reorganized. We will probably become a

general SFRPG discussion group, with *Signal GK* and possibly another fanzine as its output. Subscriptions will no longer be charged, as the administration is more trouble than it is worth and UK members have complained that they get very little for their money. We are also looking at the possibility of working with Adie Stewart (who is setting up a publishing company) and releasing unofficial adventures and other material, in the style of the *Adjutant* folios.

A name change is in prospect, as it is unlikely we will be able to continue calling ourselves HIWG(UK). There is a widely-shared feeling here that HIWG is defunct anyway.

Clay Bush

What have HIWG(UK) members received for their money? 1) Tiffany Star, 2) a large part of the 14MB of data came from HIWG members in other parts of the world, and 3) AAB Proceedings. The last they were getting before AABP took over as the flagship, so they are not getting anything new with it. However, they would not have gotten it from me before if they were not HIWG members.

Members of any organization will have to decide if they get their money's worth.

HIWG plans to continue. It is a Traveller organization, and not restricted to MT. %^%

The Imperium Ceased Being Feudal

--Rob Prior

Some thoughts on what happened to the Imperium as Traveller developed that led to the Virus (from one viewpoint).

Back in the early days (before *Book 6: Scouts*), the Imperium was a mainly benevolent but remote government. Imperial warships were widely scattered and Imperial Marines rare, smuggling was a local problem, and an adventurer was more likely to get jailed breaking a megacorp's regulations than an Imperial law. Surface wars were tolerated, even

between planets, providing both parties acknowledged the Imperium.

What happened to this playground?

Gradually, the Imperial bureaucracy grew and regulations multiplied. Rather than Imperial nobles governing, Imperial Ministries did. (I suspect this arose because most of the writers felt more comfortable with the mechanisms of a modern social democracy than with those of a feudal system.) In fact, by the time the Rebellion was being written into the plotline the Imperium resembled

a social oligarchy more than a feudal system.

Was any of this planned? I don't think so. Different writers added elements that seemed right at the time and worked well with their plots. Gradually the remoteness and non-intervention of the original Imperium faded, until it ended up as an intrusive modern government.

All this is water under the bridge now, but I think it should serve as a warning to us, as writers, so we avoid repeating the mistake. %^%

Product Notes for Traveller and The Next Era

Folio Adventures

--Clay Bush

Arrival of Vengeance is the next Traveller folio adventure. TNS reported the Azhanti High Lightning cruiser Vengeance missing; Norris has secretly sent it across the Island Clusters in Reft sector to recontact the Imperium.

Survival Margin will cover converting campaigns to the new Star Viking setting. It will give methods of converting characters, and will discuss ways to justify characters living into the new era (low berth, etc.).

No Alien Books

GDW ruled out developing any more Alien modules. Players can expect to see aliens in adventures and campaign sourcebooks. However, a definitive book about a race upsets too many campaigns that were using that race, because of clashing assumptions.

GDW has decided that definitely spelling out all details about a race is a poor use of their time. Races will be described, placed, and used as appropriate for adventures, but the text will not be overly specific about racial details. Those will be up to individual referee.

Star Viking: The Product

Most readers know that a product called Star Viking has periodically appeared on GDW's list of scheduled releases. This a rundown of what has gone by. The title is currently in limbo.

Miniatures: The initial proposal was to update *Striker*. SV would have been a miniatures game. This went as far as deciding that buyers would have to be able to play it out of the box. The project definition grew to including figures and being able to play within a half-hour of opening the box.

Converting to the T:2000 system may have been what undermined this effort. A

simplified Striker that worked from MT rules no longer made sense. T:2000 combat works very well as a miniatures system as is.

Strategic boardgame: Recently, the GDW schedule distributed with Challenge described it as a game pitting players against the petty dictators of the core. Many thought strategic boardgame.

The idea of a strategic, Imperium-wide boardgame has been kicked around for years. It could be done, but playability, interest, and cost are variables. The idea lingers on, but despite the voices of sirens ("We could have scenarios for TNE, the Civil War, the Rule of Man and establishing the First Imperium..."), no proposal has attracted a committed following or seemed feasible. There is no active effort in this direction.

Introductory game: The proposal announced was meant as a companion to Minion Hunter. Characters' pieces would move around the edge of the board, gathering strength until they could defeat the tougher opponents on the interior track(s). The game would have served to introduce players to the Star Viking milieu. GDW decided this use wasn't up to the standard the name suggested, so they dropped the product.

Leviathan with guns: The rights to the old micro-game Star Viking have expired. Why not use the idea of a Viking leader with one ship trying to set up control of former Imperial worlds? A revision of this little game into the Traveller universe is what many people expected. (Those who read Piper's *Space Viking* head this list.) GDW is set against this revision idea; This is not what they will do.

Conclusion: Star Viking is a good name, and GDW wants the right product for it. They do not know what that product will be (except that it will not be "Leviathan with guns"). No specific product carries the name now.

1994+ Releases?

Miniatures: GDW would like to do a miniatures game for the Star Viking universe. (After all, they produce *Command Decision* and *Harpoon*. They like miniatures!) The basic combat rules work well with miniatures by themselves, however. A dedicated miniatures game may come out in 1994.

Universes: A 2300AD sourcebook is a solid prospect, because the game has a committed following and GDW likes the universe. They cannot support it as a separate game system, however, but they will not confuse it with Traveller. So look for a 2300AD sourcebook about a year after TNE is released.

A sourcebook for any other universe would probably come after 2300AD. First, GDW already has all the material it needs for 2300AD. Second, it owns 2300AD, so no royalties.

The alternate universe most discussed is for *Mote in God's Eye*. I think this repitition started when the novel was mentioned as a universe that uses warp point travel rather than travel. Now, when alternate jump is mentioned, people discuss *Mote*. There doesn't seem to be any active work being done, either writing or legal. Until someone signs something, consider any mention of Moties to be an example of what can be done.

Historical: GDW has no problem with referees campaigning in different eras of Imperial history, such as pre-Rebellion and Rebellion. You can use the new rules for those periods as easily as for the Star Viking era.

One or more sourcebook for running "historical" campaigns is *possible*. FLASHBACK keeps being used as the title for any pre-1000 sourcebook, and REBELLION speaks for itself. These are only working names assigned for purposes of discussion, however. Nothing has been decided.

Baddies from the Core

--Terry McInnes

This represents a proposal that DGP considered, but that GDW rejected.

Digest Group Publications

MTJ4 will be DGP's last Traveller product. It will include the Keith brother's version of Gateway sector. After that, DGP will concentrate on its new game, AI.

Seeker Gaming Systems

Seeker Gaming Systems has a new mailing address:

Stafford Greene
P.O. Box 1027

Spanaway, WA 98387-1027

Computer Products

MicroProse bought Paragon Software. Marc Miller continues to work with them on developing computer games.

MT1 took place in one subsector. It was klunky. You had to wander around bumping into NPCs until you found one with information for you.

MT2, *Secret of the Ancients*, covers four subsectors of the Spinward Marches, and most worlds have several cities that you can visit. NPCs are color coded, and if a useful NPC has exhausted its information, it changes color to a white "generic" NPC. This product also included a routine for generating MT characters, which you can print out.

MicroProse has announced MT3, *The Unknown Worlds*, as their next adventure game. This will include three separate adventures: pursuit and rescue, mysterious quest, and "classic science fiction." The game includes routines for generating worlds; The kicker is that each adventure occurs in a randomly created universe, "guaranteeing that the same game is never played twice--by anyone." %*%

Why They Are Coming

The Baddies are a migratory species travelling outward from the Galactic Core in the direction of the Lesser Magellanic Cloud. They incidentally pass through the route of the Zhodani Core Expeditions. Because the random design of their jump grids emit a sparkling pattern when their vessels enter and leave jump space, the Baddies become known as Sparklers.

The Sparklers are migrating from the Core, because the Core is collapsing into a massive black hole in the center of our Galaxy. In addition to the danger of being sucked beyond the black hole's event horizon, the black hole has created extremely high radiation levels dangerous to the further existence of the Sparklers. However, they need relatively high radiation levels to flourish and evolve, and are most comfortable at or near the core of a galaxy or an extremely dense star cluster. Therefore, the Sparklers are migrating to find a new home at the core of the Lesser Magellanic Cloud.

First Encounter with Humans

The first human encounter with Sparklers is when a coreard Zhodani Expedition is overwhelmed by a vast fleet of Sparkler vessels suddenly tumbling out of jump space. The cumulative mental power of the Sparklers' collective mind instantly kills any Zhodani who have any psionic ability. The proletarian survivors panic and open fire, and are themselves destroyed by the Sparkler vessels' defensive fire-- but not before a jump capable message torpedo containing dispatches and descriptions of the encounter is launched.

The torpedo is found drifting in a star system several weeks later. Its contents cause near panic among the Supreme Council of the Zhodani Consulate-- The Sparkler fleet was counted in excess of 5000 vessels, each with at least 100,000 tons displacement.

Sparkler Physiology and Psychology

Physically, the individual Sparkler does not appear significant in its native state. Each weigh approximately 100 kilograms and appear to be somewhat similar to the Terran Chambered Nautilus without a tentacle cluster. The first of Duke Norris's Marines to board a Sparkler ship described the hull interior to be covered with spiral- shaped cinnamon rolls. Sparklers reproduce by budding and fission. Mature Sparklers permanently attach themselves to the inner hulls of their ships in a symbiotic relationship-- the ship provides nutrients and transportation for the entire colony, the Sparklers provide the mental energy required for the jump as well as navigational guidance and when necessary fire control.

Mentally, Sparklers are massive. The entire race is one collective mind, linked together telepathically, much as the individual cells of a human brain are linked together electrically. The Sparklers (or perhaps The Sparkler is more appropriate) are totally aware of the entire existence of the race as well as of the supreme objective of finding a new home where they can continue to evolve, eventually to be entirely free of a material existence. The death of one Sparkler unit is of no consequence. The destruction of one Sparkler ship is equal to a human clipping a fingernail. The collective mind would still exist to rebuild itself even if only one Sparkler ship remained.

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Sparklers (con.)

Sparklers have an additional attribute that makes them fearsome. They are shape-shifters. Once they perceive the physical pattern of a living being, they can alter their shape and coloration to exactly match this being. Their models may be physical beings they see directly, or mental patterns they detect telepathically from other sophonts.

The Sparkler Ships

Sparkler starships are massive semi-aware biological constructs. They first evolved in the upper reaches of the Sparkler homeworld's dense atmosphere and were adopted as a means of locomotion by the original Sparklers who helped them hunt aerial prey. Sparklers tamed their homeworld through biological and genetic engineering, and adapted the massive atmospheric creatures to a vacuum environment. Later with a biologically integrated jump grid and internal energy storage, these creatures were engineered into starships. Sparkler starships carry no fuel as such. They absorb and store stellar energy from the primary star they orbit, and use most of the energy to jump. The remaining energy is used for life support. The collective mind of the on-board Sparklers provide navigation and jump guidance to their ships. Known Sparkler ships displaced between 100,000 and one million tons.

The Sparkler Wars

Zhodani forces launched a massive strike against the Sparkler fleet. The attack was a disaster. Psionic Zhodani died instantly when the Zho fleet jumped into the Sparkler-occupied system, while the proles were stunned, incapable of fighting. 90% of the Zhodani fleet was lost. The Zhodani appealed to all nearby starfaring races for help against this common foe, who they believed was intent on wiping out all sentient life.

Other human and alien races, less psionically endowed, were less vulnerable to the collective mind. The Sparkler drive toward the center of the Consulate was blunted by a combined counter-attack of Deneb Domain Humans, Vargr from the Democracy of Greats and the Brzech Council, and Aslani from the Spinward Marches.

Paradoxically, those without psionic talents who were in contact with Sparklers were able to survive and communicate with them. The collective mind is so powerful that only individuals considered under normal circumstances to have no psionic power were able to receive thoughts from the Sparklers and communicate in return. A number of battles were fought before this was realized.

Fighting ceased, however, when humans and others were able to piece together the reasons for the Sparklers' migration, determine that they (it) had no hostile intent, and were fighting only in self-defense. The allies established a safe-conduct corridor Rimward through Known Space. %^%

The Virus: Electronic Frankenstein

The Virus has received much bad press from computer users complaining that one computer virus could not affect all machines, defeat all anti-virus software, etc.

GDW realizes that a data-networked civilization would not lose knowledge through an economic collapse. The old data would be there to rebuild from. Because they are committed to a fresh, open setting, they have decided to reverse the above: a loss of knowledge caused an economic collapse. Also, after the collapse is over, the data is not there to rebuild from.

The Virus is the plot device designed to accomplish this.

Now, the explanation. Scientists working with "carnivorous" Cymbeline chips develop intelligent hunters, but are unable to find a way to make them attack only the enemy. The lab is raided, the chips get loose.

It is not one virus. The chips are mutating. It doesn't help that they are intelligent, and only need access to data chips to become fully self-aware. Being intelligent, they attack systems (hacking) until they get in. The attack is not along one vector.

Bred to destroy, they kill data networks (scrambling all data chips). Not just library data; power grid nets, water pumping nets, air handling systems, etc. And the scrambled chips include "eggs" if someone tries to reactivate the system. %^%



D20 Task System and Skills in the New Traveller

-Clay Bush

GDW has decided on a D20 system for task resolution, and they will retrofit it to all their games. They were adverse to changing away from 2D6 in Traveller; it was a point of pride that you could do everything in the system with two dice (one, if you rolled twice as often). However, they became convinced the new system's advantages outweighed the value of traditional, widely-understood mechanics.

The following is based on discussion and study of other GDW games. What sees print may differ somewhat.

REASONS WHY

SKILLS ONLY PERIOD: GDW started one of the first skill-based role playing games in 1976. Their systems have always worked from relevant skills, rather than attributes.

One problem any skill-based system has handling unskilled characters. Several answers exist. First, let referees assign level-0. Second, allow using half of related skills. Third, permit specific skills to double as another (IF liaison THEN admin = liaison-1). Fourth, create a jack-of-all-trades skill to use as a roving skill when everything else failed.

The commonest answer (buried in the system itself) was to create more skills. If navy characters could only get pilot and engineering, then create carousing so they have *some* skill they can use on a planet. This created its own problems as characters from different generations of rulebooks had very different numbers and mixes of skills.

LEVEL ONE SKILLS: Nevertheless, a skill of one at least permitted you to use the skill. That made a skill-1 (or 0) important. With the 4-6 skill levels a "black book" character might have, skill-1 was good. With characters allocating 10-20 skill levels later, skill level-1 declined in importance.

Because of the bell-shaped curve provided by 2D6, a level-1 had more incremental value than level-2. Going from level 3 to 4, and higher numbers, was less valuable than acquiring another level-1 skill.

With numbers of skill levels growing, only the proliferation of skills prevented characters becoming very similar. Even then, I played in groups where everyone had computer-1. How did the skill differentiate characters?

NO ATTRIBUTES: In the focus on skills, attributes almost disappeared. They mattered when choosing a career. During play, sometimes you rolled against education or social status. Overall, as one player told GDW, once you had the character created, you could play without any regard to attributes.

One aspect of DGP's task definition system was to allow attributes a role as *die roll modifiers*. Still, dividing by five and rounding down didn't allow much impact: only a +1 or +2.

TASK DIFFICULTY: The largest factor is succeeding at a task was the difficulty set by the referee. Whether a task was

simple or difficult decided where you were on the bell-curve. Which character attempted the task was far less important.

THE NEW TASK SYSTEM

TARGET NUMBER: With skills and attributes both in the range from 1-10, add the relevant skill and its controlling attribute together. The sum is the base number. Players want to roll under it when attempting difficult tasks.

If the character does not have the relevant skill, then use one-half of the attribute. This is the same as making the task one level harder. (GDW is discussing whether to allow skill levels of 0.)

Easy tasks are four times the sum; success is virtually guaranteed if the character has some skill and average attribute. Assign easy tasks when success is assumed.

Average tasks are double the sum, and indicate some chance of failure even for skilled characters. Difficult tasks use the unmodified sum, and are appropriate when failure is common. Formidable use one-half the sum and impossible uses one-quarter the sum.

A roll of 1 always succeeds, while a roll of 20 always fails. If the character's roll succeeds or fails by more than 10 from the target number, then he has achieved exceptional success or exceptional failure.

ATTRIBUTES AND SKILL

ATTRIBUTES: For each of six attributes, roll 2D6-2. On results of zero, reroll for the attribute. (Attributes must be at least 1.) If the total of all attributes is less than 32, add to the rolled numbers until the total equals 32.

All skills are listed under an attribute. An attribute *controls* all skills listed under it. It limits how much skill a character may have in a skill, and greatly affects task rolls.

ACQUIRING SKILLS: During generation, characters select careers in four year terms. Each career lists some specified skills, some skill points, and which skills the character can purchase.

For example, an accountant may receive Computer-1, Business-1, and 3 skill points in his first term, and five skill points in subsequent terms. Available skills are: Business, Computer, Legal, Persuasion, etc.

Skill points are used to buy skill levels in skills listed. They buy skill levels one for one, up to the value of the controlling attribute. To buy additional skill levels then costs two skill points. Characters can record a fractional skill level until they have the skill point to buy the rest of it.

CHARACTER IMPACT: The referee says that it is an easy task to access an NPC's computer. Bruno, the Marine corporal has computer-1 and intelligence of 2. His target

Outline of the New Traveller Rules for Science Fiction Gaming

GDW feels that having DGP write MegaTraveller contributed to their problems supporting MT, because it was not their system. They have set a policy that GDW will write all rules in-house.

The plan for TNE is to have all the rules in one book. This the meaning behind "generic rules." The Navy career will not be tied to the Imperial Navy, any sidebars won't discuss the Third Imperium universe, and so on. The second book, the Star Viking setting, will describe the universe and probably be where equipment, vehicles, and starships are described.

Besides the rules on character generation, the rulebook will contain everything else needed to play any SF adventure.

WORLDS

The world generation system will be unchanged. It will not change from universe to universe.

Existing world data (UWPs) will still be valid; however, by 1190 the data will be incorrect or unreliable. The only planned change is to make star types

compatible with the UWP. The agricultural world will no longer orbit a highly active, dim red cinder; instead it will orbit a main sequence GV star.

Players use the world, not the star, anyway. Hardly anyone will notice if the star types are changed in existing documents. Changing the stars will make the formulas for temperature give results compatible with the UWP definitions.

TECHNOLOGY

Time has marched on, and this revision will deal with more options. The original Traveller rules were written before the IBM PC and the Apple were manufactured.

The best example of tech advance is a mapbox; in *Striker* GDW included a pie-in-the-sky device that stored a map and scrolled around. Current navigational satellites permit knowing your location within meters, you can measure the exact range to a target with a laser range finder, and you can automatically upload the information to an artillery battery. The intent is to provide more choices for technology

when setting up and running a campaign.

Non-specific technology: Some hard-core fans want more detail and hard science consistency between systems. If GDW could prove how many joules a drive generated, they could go into the business making the 56th century reality today. They don't, and we don't. It bears repeating that internal consistency is the goal; being able to draw working diagrams of jump drives is not.

Practically, GDW aims to not be specific about how things work. Feedback is that *Starship Operators Manual* explained too much. It was a great product, but many elements conflicted with how different referees were running their campaigns. Any explanation that involves running multiple subsystems fosters role playing sessions that aren't fun. They are too much like work.

Cybernetics: New sciences and SF themes have emerged in the last 15 years. TNE will include rules for AI, cyber equipment, and robots.

AI is a big topic. Little was available on what would be in the rules. In the Star Viking setting, AI will be linked to the

D20 System (con.)

number is: $(2+1)*4 = 12$. Bruno rolls a 15 and fails an easy task. Lucky, the private with gambling-8, has no computer skill but his intelligence is 8. His target number is: $(8/2)*4 = 16$. Lucky rolls a 15 and succeeds.

Under the old Traveller system, Bruno would have had a very good chance, despite his low intelligence, while the unskilled Lucky may have been unable to succeed. (In *Twilight: 2000* Lucky would fail automatically.) If Lucky could assume Computer-0, however, his chances would be almost the same as Bruno's Computer-1.

Lastly, note that a skill level of 1 will

more than double the chance of success. With his high intelligence, however, if Lucky gets Computer-1, his chance increases to: $(8+1)*4=36$. He would fail easy tasks only on a 20, and would need only 18 or less on average tasks.

Skill-1 won't overcome a very low attribute. Bruno will never be good with computers. For an average task, he must roll 6 or less compared to the augmented Lucky's 18 or less.

CONVERSION

One early suggestion was to double all skill levels. It had the advantage of simplicity.

Trying to recreate some characters showed the big paradigm shift in the conversion; skills are related to attributes. Before, anyone could get Leadership-5 if he had enough skill capacity (Education+Intelligence). Now, Leadership is under charisma (or social standing or whatever it is finally called). What if Charisma is only one?

Any skill levels above the first cost double. Doubling the skill level gives Leadership-10. Halving all levels above one gives Leadership-5.5. Depending on attributes, characters may see their strengths reduced relative to other characters.

%*%

virus, and will be inherently unstable. The Virus could have gone in any direction; "vampire fleets" where the Virus colonies killed the crews and run the ships to a benevolent mutation that seeks redemption through saving human lives. You could set up a Paranoia-setting campaign with different Virus strains being the High Programmers.

Cyber equipment will cover the devices used in cyberpunk games. This equipment is not emphasized, however, to where it could take over the game. If the players want, it can take over a campaign, but that's always their choice. With TNE they will have that choice.

Robots have been retrofitted to Traveller (through JTAS and Robots) and to MegaTraveller. They will be included in the basic rules for TNE.

Biologicals: Two elements the rules will cover are cloning and anagathics.

Cloning is mandated, because Norris has announced that he has a "true daughter." It's not clearly said how the female clone was made, but there are several possibilities.

Anagathics have been controlled through cost and availability. In TNE, there will be physical side-effects as well.

SHIPS AND CRAFT

The design and combat rules will be in the basic rules. Following the first rule books, *Mayday* and *High Guard* complicated adventures by providing

alternate combat systems. It bothers GDW that people write adventures with starship combat results written in, because the writers were unsure how to play out a starship combat.

The intent is make the system compatible with everything. The players can fire a tank cannon at a ship and get understandable results. One view is that you will have this very-wide combat results table (CRT), and usually only a small range will matter to players, but the whole range is available when needed.

During play, maneuver will matter. The method has not been selected yet. Combat will emphasize sensors more; it will be important to have sensor lock. While Dave Nilsen plays *Harpoon*, the game will not be derived from *Harpoon's* version of modern naval combat.

Design: The design system in MegaTraveller will be scrapped. A completely revised system will appear. Consequently, players will be unable to directly convert MT ships. They will have to redesign their ships.

The system will not be a unitary monster, where you select sensors for a skateboard. Design sequences, such as in Striker, will probably be the route taken.

Design will not be based on facings. The goal is fewer details, and armoring sides and placing internal systems would add details.

Power requirements may be revised downward. Currently, they are huge. A

modern town of 1,000 uses only 1.5 megawatts. Rob Prior did an analysis of heat loss needed to keep the ship from melting, and a capital ship's surface would emit like a small sun. He thinks the heat would melt the ship. Beam lasers may go down from 250MW to the 1-5MW that 2300AD used; Dave Nilsen found Prior's findings interesting.

FTL Travel: To cover the whole SF field, the rules will include alternate ship's systems. For faster-than-light (FTL) travel, current plans include jump drive, stutterwarp, and "stargate."

As travelling through space with a continuous presence in normal space, stutterwarp is the best approximation for Star Trek's warp drive. Seen in this light, stutterwarp is more than just a hook for a possible future 2300AD sourcebook.

"Stargate" was being used to mean travel as in *Mote in God's Eye*. I have sent GDW a letter arguing that this is "warp point." A stargate is a physical installation for jumping objects to other stargates. The two give rise to very different storylines.

STL Travel: While not discussed as thoroughly, there will be alternate systems here as well. Thruster drives were debated; anti-grav, fusion rocket, and (again) stutterwarp will be available.

The system will permit adding more design sequences. COACC and Wet Navy showed that airplanes and boats can be added to SF settings. %*%

Submission Guidelines

Adventures: Aim for 4,000 words. Traveller has evolved beyond the shorter Amber Zone format. Present an adventure detailed enough for the referee to run immediately (that evening.)

Old style Amber Zone adventures are okay for the Imperial Lines newsletter.

Most adventures are transplanted to a referee's own campaign. They should be able to adapt your adventure to their setting. Spell out any assumptions.

Folios: These run to 12,000-16,000 words, with 12,500 being average. The format is perfect for a two-day session; you may organize it into two or three logical sections corresponding to playing sessions.

Supporting materials: Clearly designate any supporting material as such. This applies to ship design worksheets, general maps, and so on.

Files: Send ASCII files. They do all

formatting and text alignment in the production program.

Sending a computer file makes it much more likely that *anyone* will publish your article! It saves retyping it.

Always send a double-spaced hard copy, even if you send a file. That is what they edit and review from. Otherwise, they have to print it out first.

Maps and art: They always redraw these in-house. Send a copy, or send a

Star Viking Adventure Settings

—Clay Bush

There will be three adventuring regions in the Star Viking period.

SPINWARD COALITION

The Spinward Marches continues as a high-tech area. It is a preserve of Imperial institutions and ship types. Some parts of it (Mora? Rhyllanor?) will have advanced to TL16.

The Zhodani survive, sheltered from the Virus by the Domain of Deneb. The Eighth Core Expedition was to last from 1150 to 1190; they continue their policy of coreward expansion in the New Era. Zhodani policy toward Deneb is containment, with the understanding that Deneb will not annex smaller spinward states.

Trade with the small states rimward of the Zhodani Consulate may make for an interesting campaign. Exploration to spinward would be into unknown territory that was within the Ancients Sphere.

One possibility for the New Era that was considered was for the Zhodani expeditions to bring forth Berserkers from the Galactic Core. Anyone interested in this idea can look at the Sparkler article elsewhere for a variant.

POCKET EMPIRES

A variety of pocket empires occupy the territory of the Third Imperium and the Solomani Confederation. Most consist of one world that kept one or two creaky old freighters that the Virus could not infect; none will have more than ten ships maximum.

In all, there are perhaps 20-30 of these pocket empires. That works out to about one per sector. Their trading range is at most a subsector, and usually less. Some trade exploration is performed; systems without habitable planets tend to be

uninhabited now.

Not all of these empires are dominated by humans.

The players should be the crew of a (or the) starship. Given selection of one crew from a planetary population, it should be impressed on players that their characters are loyal to that planet. Either the captain or a security officer should be

"The Domain of Deneb is kind of a preserve of Imperial Space. We're not trying to trash the area where most of our work has occurred. We are trying to open new territory."—GDW

"The goal is to recyde dull, interior sectors. You want to try to run an interesting Striker scenario in Core? Good luck."—GDW

an ultra-loyal NPC. And where would they skip to?

STAR VIKINGS

This will be the main story line developed by GDW adventures.

The Star Vikings originate with merchant groups operating on the fringes of Hiver space. (The Hivers weathered the Virus.) Diaspora has several surviving worlds which have developed xenophobic governments. The Hivers are

worried about these worlds leading the eventual human reunification, so they help the merchants as a way to counter the xenophobes.

The name Star Viking originates with the modular ships used by the merchants. They call these long, modular vessels "longships," and someone starts calling them the Vikings. People like to adopt unusual names; Broncos, Chiefs, Patriots, etc. Maybe some of these guys paint horns on their vacc suits. Anyway, they aren't out to loot and pillage. (Only some of the historical Vikings were raiders. Most traded; some settled Russia.)

A normal SV expedition consists of one longship with riders and cargo pods. It probably has Hiver computers and one or two Hiver technicians. (Individual Hivers are generally referred to as "Ned.") The normal mission is trade exploration.

The first adventures will probably be about armed expedition sent to recover crews, ships, and diplomats seized by xenophobic governments. Ships are precious, and the worlds simply grabbed the first ship to contact them for their own use. % ^ %

The New Era is not meant to be a dark, depressing period. It is *after* the collapse. I described the darkness before the dawn.

What is not desired is "wallowing" in the darkness. Do players enjoy the darkness and see themselves as agents of it? Or do they see themselves positively?

A dark future game is liberating in that one can confront one's fears. In the New Era, players can posit themselves as positive energy in the system. It is also a science fiction setting where anything could happen or be found.

The interior of the old Imperium has one advantage over other areas to explore. You can expect some of the natives to speak English. Well, Galangic, the 56th century version. Okay, pronunciations differ....but we're getting picky here.

Character _____
Race _____
Gender _____

Service & Terms _____
Final Rank _____

Age _____
Weight _____
Height _____
Load _____

T3 SIG - Possible TNE Character Record Sheet (No promises!)

Strength _____
Archery _____
Heavy Weapons _____
Mechanic _____
Melee Cbt (Armed) _____
Melee Cbt (Unarmed) _____
Small Arms (Pistol) _____
Small Arms (Rifle) _____
Thrown Weapon _____

Constitution _____
Climbing _____
Combat Engineer _____
Equestrian() _____
Equestrian() _____
Parachute _____
Scuba _____
Swimming _____
Vacc Suit _____
Vessel use (Boat) _____
Vessel use (Hovercraft) _____
Vessel use (Watercraft) _____

Agility _____
Acrobatics _____
Artisan _____
Damoliions _____
Electronics _____
Forgery _____
Lockpick _____
Pickpocket _____
Stealth _____
Zero-G environment _____

Education _____
Administration _____
Business _____
Communications _____
Computer Ops _____
Engineering _____
Medical _____
Power Plant Ops _____
Pwr Suit (Battle Dress) _____
Pwr Suit (Exoskeleton) _____
Robotics _____
Science (Biology) _____
Science (Chemistry) _____
Science (Physics) _____
Science _____
Science _____

Charisma _____
Act/Bluff _____
Bargain _____
Disguise _____
Gambling _____
Instruction _____
Interrogation _____
Jack-of-all-trades _____
Language _____
Language _____
Language _____
Language _____
Leadership _____
Liaison _____
Persuasion _____
Steward _____

Intelligence _____
Forward Observer _____
Observation _____
Navigation _____
Pilot (Fixed Wing) _____
Pilot (Grav) _____
Pilot (Interface) _____
Pilot (Rotary Wing) _____
Pilot (Starship) _____
Psychology _____
Ship Ops (Gunnery) _____
Ship Ops (Atrogation) _____
Ship Ops (Sensors) _____
Streetwise _____
~~Streetwise~~ _____
Survival _____
Tracking _____
Vehicle (Heavy) _____
Vehicle (Wheeled) _____
Willpower _____

Empathy

Animal empathy _____
Computer empathy _____
Empathic healing _____
Foreboding _____
Human empathy _____
Project emotion _____
Project thought _____
Willpower drain _____

Psionic Skills ("traditional")

Shield _____
Awareness _____
Clairvoyance _____
Telepathy _____
Telekinesis _____
Teleportation _____

Describe any special talent(s) here:

Initiative

Base Hit Values

Skill	Close (x2)	Medium (x1)	Long (x0.5)	Extreme (x0.25)
Archery (Bow Weapons)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Heavy Weapons	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Small Arms (Pistol)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Small Arms (Rifle)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Thrown Weapon:

<input type="text"/>	Range in meters (1kg)
<input type="text"/>	Roll needed up to range
<input type="text"/>	Roll up to 2 x range

Unarmed Combat Damage

Hit Capacity

Base
(Head)
(Chest)
(R. Arm)
(L. Arm)
(Abdomen)
(R. Leg)
(L. Leg)

Weapon Data

Weapon Name	ROF	Dam	Pen	Bulk	Mag	Recoil		Range
						SS	Burst	

Equipment

Contacts